

## Exhibition *Art nouveau - Art déco. Marseille au cœur des styles*

Marseille, Château Borély – Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode

8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2026 – 25<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2027

### Room 25 – FASHION GALLERY – Corridor

#### Introductory wall text

##### Fashion and the Decorative Arts

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fashion and the decorative arts were part of the same creative impulse: to express, through form and material, the evolution of taste and social customs. In this gallery, garments and accessories enter into dialogue with furniture, glassware and ceramics, revealing the constant exchanges between the world of dress and that of the decorative arts.

From 1900 to 1937, the female silhouette underwent profound transformations, reflecting new attitudes towards the body and modernity. Fashion designers, like interior decorators, sought to reconcile elegance with comfort, in keeping with a society undergoing rapid change.

These developments formed part of a broader dialogue affecting all fields of artistic creation. Art Nouveau interiors, conceived as harmonious ensembles, celebrated the rhythms of nature, whether expressed through vegetal motifs or aquatic forms.

With the advent of Art Deco, this imaginative vocabulary gradually gave way to a more restrained language, dominated by straight or gently curved lines. Between the two world wars, the style reached its full flourishing in France, combining vivid colours, strong contrasts and forms inspired by Cubism—visible here in the reinterpretation of marine decorative motifs.

The diversity of Art Deco expression is also reflected in the extensive programme of modernisation undertaken by the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, which abandoned its exclusive attachment to porcelain in order to explore stoneware and faïence. It is likewise evident in furniture design, whose rigorous simplicity foreshadowed the rise of functionalism in the mid-twentieth century.

#### Section wall texts

##### Woman and Her Image : Fashion and Style in the Age of Art Nouveau

With the prestigious Exposition Universelle de 1900, Paris became the world capital of fashion. At the time, around twenty renowned couture houses were active, among them Paul Poiret, Jeanne Paquin, Jacques Doucet and Mariano Fortuny, the favourite designer of Marcel Proust, who mentioned him seventeen times in *In Search of Lost Time*.

These designers produced fluid creations liberated from the corset, garments that followed the movement of the body and showcased new materials and techniques. Art Nouveau shared this pursuit: the supple, undulating line, inspired by nature, became a common language for couture, sculpture and the decorative arts.

The dancers sculpted by Agathon Léonard, as well as candelabra decorated with female figures and thistles, echo these forms and draperies inspired by dance, nature and a reimagined antiquity. Woman thus became both a decorative motif and a symbol of modernity.

Within the intimate sphere, beauty and toilette accessories testify to the everyday practices of the “flower-woman” celebrated by Art Nouveau. Such objects, like the garments themselves, reflect a vision of woman still largely conceived as a figure of elegance and seduction, whose social identity was expressed above all through her appearance.

### The Scarf Game

With « Le Jeu de l'écharpe » (« The Scarf Game »), the sculptor Agathon Léonard conceived a series of fifteen statuettes of dancers in biscuit porcelain, designed as a monumental centrepiece for a table ensemble produced by the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres. First presented to the public in 1897, these models were subsequently produced in porcelain for the Exposition Universelle de 1900.

Four of these fifteen figures are displayed here. Captured in light and airy poses, they form a veritable sculptural ballet. Among them, the Danseuse à l'écharpe (« Dancer with a Scarf »), one of the most celebrated, embodies the artist's ambition: to fix within an immobile medium the dynamism and fluidity of movement.

This visual language resonates with the art of Loïe Fuller, whose choreographies of monumental veils, enhanced by coloured lighting effects, astonished audiences at the 1900 exhibition. In both Léonard's and Fuller's work, textiles become an extension of the body, tracing a sinuous, flowing line characteristic of Art Nouveau.

Yet the sculptor's inspiration was not limited to this source. Critics of the time compared his figures to the ancient Greek statuettes of Tanagra figurines, while the pleated garments recall the textile creations of Mariano Fortuny. Introduced in 1907, his Delphos gowns, with their fine pleats reminiscent of ancient chitons, reflect the same quest for garments that follow the freedom of gesture.

This search for harmony between body and textile also echoes the experiments of Isadora Duncan, another pioneer of modern dance who claimed a direct lineage from ancient Greece and whose liberated movements inspired painters, sculptors and fashion designers alike.

### Woman and Her Image : Fashion and Style in the Age of Art Deco

The fashion of the 1920s and 1930s reflects the profound aesthetic and social transformations of the interwar period. By presenting two silhouettes renewed every three months, this section places in dialogue two pivotal moments in the history of Art Deco: 1920–1925 and 1930–1935.

Creations from the earlier period display a fluid and androgynous silhouette inherited from the “garçonne”: straight dresses, dropped waists and liberated legs. Light, supple fabrics accompanied a more active social life in which sport, dancing and travel played an increasingly important role. In 1925, at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, fashion established itself as an art form in its own right, alongside architecture, furniture and theatre.

Ten years later, couture underwent a decisive shift. The waistline rose, the hips were redefined and the draped techniques championed by Madeleine Vionnet restored a sculptural femininity. This evolution reflects a new refinement and a desire to assert a rediscovered sensuality, already heralding post-war trends.

These garments converse with tapestries produced by the Manufacture de Beauvais in the early 1930s after designs by Charles Edelmann and Charles Martin. Aviation, boating and swimming celebrate the dynamism of an era captivated by speed, aquatic leisure and tourism.

Designed to accompany the modern woman travelling by train, ocean liner or aeroplane, handbags and travel accessories embody the spirit of Art Deco as applied to everyday objects.

## Objects labels

### > Glazed display case presenting mannequin figures

DISPLAY CASE # 1

From 08.05 to 06.09.2026

**Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo (1871-1949)**, *Delphos* dress, c. 1920, pleated silk taffeta  
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Museo Fortuny

Painter, sculptor, photographer and designer, Mariano Fortuny was less a couturier than a visionary inventor. Steeped in medieval culture and Greek antiquity, and fascinated by technology and craftsmanship, he embodies the synthesis of aestheticism and modernity. Like Paul Poiret, he contributed to the emancipation of the female body and, from 1909, registered two patents: one for a "type of pleated, undulating fabric", the other for the Delphos dress. Inspired by the Greek chiton, its straight cut and finely permanent pleating follow the body's natural lines, freed from the corset, and allow unprecedented freedom of movement. From Isadora Duncan to the Marchesa Casati, the artistic elite clamoured for it. Unchanged in form, it continued to be produced until Fortuny's death in 1949.

From 09.09.2026 to 10.01.2027

**Paul Poiret**, French Haute Couture House founded in 1903 by Paul Poiret (1879-1944)  
Evening dress, Haute couture, c. 1911, Silk muslin, rhinestones, silk satin lined with organza,  
passementerie belt with twisted metallic threads  
Paris, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa

After working for Jacques Doucet and Worth, Paul Poiret founded his house in 1903. A visionary couturier and entrepreneur, he revolutionised the Belle Époque silhouette from 1906 onwards: supple, streamlined dresses worn without corset or bustle, high waistlines, and fresh colours inspired by the Directoire. The torso straightens and the line is purified. His style, founded on clarity of line, draws on the Orientalism of the Ballets Russes: caftan coats, kimonos, harem skirts and zouave trousers in vivid fabrics. A great traveller, he drew inspiration from Japan, North Africa, Central Asia and European folk traditions. In 1911, he founded the Rosine cosmetics house, followed by the "Petite Usine" with Raoul Dufy, the Atelier Colin,

and the Atelier Martine school for young women. His extravagant spending, the rise of the garçonne style championed by Chanel, and the 1929 economic crisis precipitated his decline and the closure of his house.

**From 13.01 to 25.04.2027**

**Chanel**, French Haute Couture House founded in 1909 by Gabrielle Chanel (1883–1971)  
Blouse, Haute couture, Spring/Summer 1919, Silk crêpe embroidered with silk threads  
CHANEL Heritage Collection, Paris

Gabrielle Chanel opened a millinery workshop in Paris in 1909. Promoting her own creations, she introduced, from 1912 onwards, garments with simplified lines—sweaters and Breton tops, jackets and blouses worn with supple skirts—made from soft materials borrowed from menswear, giving women an androgynous elegance.

In the aftermath of the war, like certain couturiers such as Jean Patou and Elsa Schiaparelli, Chanel intuitively understood the expectations of clients seeking functional clothing suited to modern life. The four years of conflict had transformed society, accelerated women's emancipation, and profoundly altered habits of dress: a woman could now dress herself unaided, as garments were no longer "put on" but "slipped into" in a single movement, over the head or from the feet. As exemplified by this model, Chanel's formal and decorative simplicity in fashion parallels that achieved in the visual arts by Cubism.

DISPLAY CASE # 2

**From 08.05 to 06.09.2026**

**Mariano Fortuny y Madr,azo (1871–1949)**  
Coat, c. 1910–1920, block-printed silk velvet  
Château Borély – Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode

Between 1901 and 1934, Fortuny developed and patented several printing processes: natural pigments applied in successive layers; mechanical printing using screens or blocks; and techniques based on metallic oxides (copper, bronze, aluminium). Complex and masterfully controlled, these methods interact subtly with light and enhance each fabric, rendered unique through its texture and pattern. Initially printed by hand on silks imported from Japan, these pieces were reserved for luxury production. A 1910 patent, inspired by Japanese katagami stencils, enabled broader production in the 1920s on longer lengths of fabric for a wider clientele. The models, essentially unchanged, are difficult to date, and motifs were often reused.

Characteristic of his tunics and caftans, the decoration of this coat draws on Italian Renaissance motifs of the pomegranate and pineapple, disseminated in Venice and Constantinople during the sixteenth century.

**From 09.09.2026 to 10.01.2027**

**Callot Sœurs**, French Haute Couture house founded in 1895  
Evening dress, model "Pour la gloire", Haute couture, Autumn/Winter 1918, Silk muslin, embroidery, lace, stones, black and white pearls

Paris, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa

In 1895, Marie, Marthe, Regina and Joséphine Callot opened a couture house in Paris, building on the success of an earlier shop specialising in lace and trimmings. In the early twentieth century, Callot Sœurs established itself among the leading Parisian houses alongside Worth, Jacques Doucet and Jeanne Lanvin. Renowned for the richness of its ornamentation—antique lace, beaded embroidery, Orientalist influences and luxurious textiles—the house attracted an affluent international clientele. While the First World War imposed simpler, more practical fashions suited to women's work and material restrictions, this dress instead testifies to the enduring luxury and refined aesthetic for which the house was celebrated.

**From 13.01 to 25.04.2027**

**Gabrielle Chanel (1883–1971)**

Dress, Silk muslin embroidered with iridescent glass beads

CHANEL Heritage Collection, Paris

For Gabrielle Chanel, formal, chromatic and ornamental restraint underpinned her pursuit of simplicity and naturalness—synonymous, for her, with elegance. Generally sparing in decoration, her preferred motifs remained flowers, particularly the camellia. With its immaculate whiteness, regular petals and rounded form, its minimal design—bordering on abstraction—accords as much with Chanel's ideal of pared-down luxury as with the Art Deco aesthetic.

An element of adornment, decoration and accessory alike, it appears across all media—printed, embroidered, applied or inset into lace—unceasingly revisited until it became the house's iconic signature, the expression of a timeless style. Although no definitive attribution can be established, this model, attributed to Chanel, is entirely consistent with her aesthetic vocabulary and creative principles.

DISPLAY CASE # 3

**From 08.05 to 06.09.2026**

**Lucien Lelong**, French Haute Couture house founded in 1921 by Lucien Lelong (1889–1958)

Evening dress, Haute couture, c. 1928, Silk organdie, glass beads, rhinestones

Paris, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa

During the 1910s, the female silhouette evolved from flower to stem. From 1918 onwards, in the aftermath of the war, women embraced the *garçonne* style. An expression of emancipation and modernity, the tubular dress—shortened for the first time—flattened the body's curves. Simple by day, evening models displayed luxurious embroidery that sparkled under the lights of dance halls. In response to the popularity of the Charleston, couturiers designed dresses that moved with every gesture by adding floating scarves and panels. For Lelong, creator of the kinetic line in 1926, the superimposition of lightweight fabrics alone created volume and transparency. Draped over the shoulders, with only a slight blousing of the bodice, this type of dress dominated the years 1927–1928. Here, it is animated by a pattern of beads and rhinestones forming circles, a recurring Art Deco motif.

**From 09.09.2026 to 10.01.2027**

**Lanvin**, French Haute Couture house founded in 1885 by Jeanne Lanvin (1867–1946)

Day coat, model "La Fontaine", Haute couture, Autumn/Winter 1923, Pongé and faille silk

Paris, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa

Jeanne Lanvin began as a milliner in 1885 and opened her first hat shop in 1889. With the creation in 1909 of a department for young girls and women, she joined the prestigious circle of Parisian haute couture. Her work is distinguished by meticulous attention to detail and a masterful command of decorative techniques; embroidery, appliqué, inlay and aligned stitching characterise her creations of the 1920s. Inspired by her travels and her textile collections, Lanvin adapted quilting techniques into refined fabrics whose geometric patterns harmonise with the Art Deco aesthetic.

This coat is a fine example : the oblique arrangement of ribs, symmetrically aligned at the waist, structures the silhouette and lends it an elegant rigour. In 1921, in collaboration with decorator Armand-Albert Rateau, she created a pavilion dedicated to the art of living; Rateau also designed her boutiques, her private residence and, in 1927, the celebrated bottle for the perfume "Arpège".

**From 13.01 to 25.04.2027**

**Lenief**, French Haute Couture house founded in 1922 by Alfred Lenief (1890–?)

Afternoon dress, 1920s, Silk velvet, metallic sequins and gold lamé

Paris, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa

Emerging from the simplified wardrobe of the war period, the dress of the 1920s is characterised by a flattened bodice, a dropped waist and a boldly shortened hemline. In a rapidly changing society, this modern style was enthusiastically adopted by the garçonnnes. Under the influence of sport, which now dictated clothing design, couturiers prioritised comfort, freedom of movement and fluidity of silhouette. Simple by day, dresses were adorned in the evening with beads, rhinestones and sequins, echoed in accessories. Exoticism, a major source of inspiration for fashion and the decorative arts, enjoyed considerable popularity. Couture houses readily incorporated Orientalist motifs. In this model, the embroidery of the plastron, in gold and silver tones that catch the light, contrasts with the sobriety of the characteristic tubular line of the decade.

DISPLAY CASE # 4

**From 08.05 to 06.09.2026**

**Jean Patou**, French Haute Couture house founded in 1914 by Jean Patou (1887–1936)

Jumpsuit, c. 1930, Wool

Château Borély – Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode

From the 1920s onwards, the rise of leisure culture, sunbathing and sport demanded practical clothing. Patou created chic yet relaxed fashions for an affluent clientele, for both day and evening, favouring a slender silhouette and a sporty elegance. Soft, elastic knitwear liberated movement: sweaters, twin-sets, skirts and dresses with Cubist geometric patterns coexisted with the beach pyjama—popularised by Chanel

from 1929—which made the wearing of trousers socially acceptable. Seen on the beach, aboard yachts, in town, or at dance halls and casinos, it appeared in coloured jersey or luxurious silks. This example, once belonging to Princess Nilüfer, Begum, is emblematic of Patou’s “Sport” line, dedicated to beachwear and garments for swimming, skiing, golf and tennis.

**From 09.09.2026 to 10.01.2027**

**Delapierre**, French ready-to-wear brand founded in 1929 by Madame Delapierre

Dress, c. 1935, Linen

Château Borély – Musée des Arts décoratifs, de la Faïence et de la Mode

New seaside practices and sport, hallmarks of modernity, accelerated the simplification of the wardrobe. The Côte d’Azur, frequented in winter by elites, became in the 1920s a summer destination. Cannes, Nice and Monte Carlo fostered a wardrobe combining comfort, functionality and elegance. The major houses—Lanvin, Patou, Chanel and Schiaparelli—were soon joined by smaller local enterprises, precursors of luxury ready-to-wear, offering lightweight fabrics and sunlit colours: the “Riviera look”. From 1929 onwards, Madame Delapierre proposed designs suited to the climate, promoting “modern hygiene”: suits, dresses and beachwear in silk, cotton or linen—a fabric then little used—which she had discovered in Paris at Gustave Sennelier.

**From 13.01 to 25.04.2027**

**Madeleine Vionnet**, French Haute Couture house founded in 1912 by Madeleine Vionnet (1876–1975)

Day dress, Haute couture, Spring/Summer 1926, Crêpe and pongé silk

Paris, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa

In the 1920s, Madeleine Vionnet established herself as the queen of the bias cut. Visionary and largely indifferent to passing trends, she transformed the traditional conception of garments cut on the straight grain. Beaded and embroidered models gave way to a new aesthetic privileging line over ornament. Anticipating the fashions of the 1930s, dresses became more closely fitted, accentuating the curves of the body through the elastic properties of the bias, previously reserved for collars and cuffs. Fascinated by ancient Greece, Vionnet reinvented free drapery by reducing seams and fastenings, creating garments that could be slipped on like a glove through ingenious inlays, without recourse to corsetry. Of apparent simplicity, her dresses possess a highly complex internal structure, earning her the nickname “the Euclid of fashion”. Their fluidity also derives from the use of crêpe de Chine, crêpe Georgette or silk muslin, as seen here in both the dress and its underlayer.